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AUTHOR Lan, Qua' Swee  
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## ABSTRACT

This paper reviews resource sharing on three levels: (1) Singapore, (2) jointly with Malaysia, and (3) Southeast Asia. Topics covered include staff training, cooperative acquisition, bibliographical projects, the Cooperative Microfilming Program, the Microfilm Clearing House, and the proposed Consortium of National Libraries and Documentation Centers for Southeast Asia. Conclusions indicate that Singapore enjoys good cooperation among libraries, and with links and contacts established with Malaysian and ASEAN neighbors, resource sharing will become a matter of course in the area. (Author/JEG)

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RESOURCE SHARING IN SINGAPORE LIBRARIES

by

Quah Swee Lan

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## RESOURCE SHARING IN SINGAPORE LIBRARIES

Paper prepared for the IFLA/UNESCO Pre-Session Seminar,  
Antwerp, 29 August - 3 September, 1977

by

Quah Swee Lan  
Assistant Librarian  
National Library, Singapore

This paper will focus on various aspects of resource sharing in libraries, such as staff training, cooperative acquisitions, bibliographical projects, and interlending. Most of these are Singapore projects or joint Singapore/Malaysia projects, though in recent years, the increase in emphasis on regional cooperation has resulted in the initiation of many regional projects.

### Staff training

The availability of suitably trained staff is basic to the provision and operation of library services. Singapore, with its network of well established and well equipped libraries, has some experience in staff training which has been extended to library staff not only locally but also in Asia.

### Training awards

Since 1964, the Singapore government has offered training awards in librarianship to member countries of the Colombo Plan. In 1973 similar awards were offered under the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Nations) Training Award Scheme, but as it was decided not to duplicate offers under the Colombo Plan, this scheme has since ceased.

The awards are for in-service training at the National Library and are usually for three-month periods. Senior Fellowships and Junior Fellowships are offered, depending on the applicant's age and educational background. Between 1964 and March 1977, the number of persons who have received such awards totalled forty-two. Trainees have come from Indonesia, Iran, Laos, Maldives Island, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The qualifications, work experience and interests of each trainee are taken into consideration in planning his training schedule. He is then assigned to various departments of the Library under the supervision of senior staff. Visits and short attachments to other libraries are also arranged, which include the university and polytechnic libraries as well as special libraries such as those of the Regional Language Centre and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Apart from the Colombo Plan, training schemes have also been initiated under the sponsorship of various organisations. These include the Brunei Government, the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation Scheme, the Asia Foundation, as well as various libraries in Malaysia such as the Ipoh Public Library, the Penang Library and the Sabah State Library. Students from the MARA Institute of Technology School of Librarianship, Malaysia have also done practical training at the National Library.

The training programmes used to be organised by the National Library's senior staff, who take turns to be designated Orientation Officer in addition to their other duties. In 1976, one Assistant Librarian from the National Library attended an International Training Course in Library Training at the Western Australian Institute of Technology in Perth. On his completion of the course,

he was designated Training Officer and was put in charge of training programmes in the National Library. In order to improve future training programmes, a Training Programme Evaluation has been devised to provide some feedback on the effectiveness of the training received.

Within Singapore, the National Library also provides training for staff of other libraries, including those from government department libraries and private organisations. Its professional staff have given advice to various institutions with regard to the organisation or reorganisation of their libraries as well as other related services such as the compilation of simple rules for the cataloguing of Malay names, including lectures on the use of these rules.

#### Courses

Singapore does not have a library school. Recruits to the profession have obtained professional qualifications either by attending library schools overseas or sitting externally for the Library Association (Britain) or Library Association of Australia examinations. To go abroad, whether on scholarship or privately can only be the privilege of a few; the majority have to obtain qualifications by self-study while working at the same time.

To help such persons, the National Library organises lectures and tutorials conducted by the Library's qualified staff. Previously attendance at these courses was limited to staff from the National Library and government department libraries who belong to the Government Library Service. Now, unqualified staff from other libraries are permitted to attend the courses and lecturers have also been recruited from qualified staff of several libraries.

Other courses that have been held include the Institute of Education's Course on School Librarianship, conducted in Chinese; the Library Association of Singapore's series of courses for the continuing education of its members such as lectures on the legal materials of Malaysia and Singapore and their use, public relations, and indexing and abstracting; and in-service courses for teacher librarians organised by the Ministry of Education.

### Exchange of Staff

Besides in-service training, opportunities for wider experience as well as greater understanding and appreciation of the work of other libraries can be obtained through staff exchanges. Within Singapore, the National Library and Nanyang University Library have participated in a Staff Exchange Programme.

Regionally, the question of staff exchanges between Southeast Asian librarians was discussed at the Second Conference of Southeast Asian Librarians in Manila in 1973. Some proposals have been made for implementation of an exchange programme but to date, none has actually taken place. Another scheme that has been proposed is the Commonwealth Library Association (COMLA) attachments and internships scheme. But as most of the Southeast Asian countries with the exception of Singapore and Malaysia are not members of COMLA, the scheme would not be applicable to the region as a whole.

It may also be mentioned that tangible benefits can also be experienced such as the processing of foreign language materials which could not be handled linguistically by a library's staff. For example, libraries such as the National Library and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies have collections in the Thai language which could not be processed for lack of staff competent in the language. An exchange between Thai and Singapore librarians would be mutually profitable.

### Cooperative Acquisitions

In a developing country like Singapore, it would be expensive and foolish to duplicate library resources indiscriminately or attempt to be self-sufficient. As distances between libraries are short, there is no difficulty arranging for materials to be transported on interlibrary loan from one library to another.

Singapore libraries try not to duplicate one another's collections where expensive or specialised materials are concerned. Among the larger libraries, information on the proposed purchase of new materials is circulated amongst one another before a decision is made and an order placed.

In September 1970, the National Library convened a meeting of seven of the larger libraries in Singapore to discuss the coordination of policy in the cooperative acquisition of Southeast Asian materials, in order to ensure more comprehensive coverage of such materials in Singapore and to avoid unnecessary and expensive duplication. The meeting examined each library's acquisition policies with respect to Southeast Asian materials by geographical area, subject, language and type of material.

Centralised acquisition is also practiced on a small scale. The Standing Committee for Libraries (Ministry and Schools) places bulk orders of selected titles for primary and secondary school libraries. For these titles, sets of catalogue cards are provided by the National Library while the book suppliers also undertake the processing of books.

### Bibliographical projects

Cooperative bibliographical projects can be divided into local and regional projects. Local projects are those undertaken in Singapore or jointly with Malaysia whereas regional projects are those involving the Southeast Asian region.

Singapore and Malaysia librarians have been involved in cooperative projects ever since the formation of the Malayan Library Group in 1955, which included librarians from both countries. With independence for both countries, separate library associations were formed in each country. However, close links continue to be maintained through a Joint Liaison Council (JLC) of the two library associations. In order to coordinate and carry out joint projects the JLC established a Joint Standing Committee on Library and Bibliographical Services (JSLCBS)<sup>1</sup>, and it is this body which spearheaded many of the bibliographical projects completed or in progress.

### Union Catalogue of Scientific and Technical Serials

This is one of the projects initiated by the JSLCBS in 1966. Originally intended to include the holdings of Malaysian libraries as well, it is now confined to Singapore holdings. The 30 participating libraries include public, academic, government and quasi-government libraries.

The Union Catalogue was first compiled on cards and maintained by the Reference Division of the National Library. In 1977, it was computerised and published jointly by the National Library and the Singapore Institute of Standards and Industrial Research (SISR).

Some 4,000 titles are listed in 2 sections, an alphabetical section and a subject section arranged by the Dewey Decimal Classification, 18th edition. Serials classified in the 500s, 600s (except medicine) and 720s of the Dewey and UDC schemes are included. Fringe subjects such as economics, transport and town planning are selectively included. Library location symbols are taken from the List of Library Symbols compiled by the National Library.

### National Bibliography

Policies for the national bibliographies of Singapore and Malaysia were formulated by the JUSCENS. The first issues of the Singapore National Bibliography (SNB) and the Bibliografi Negara Malaysia (Malaysian National Bibliography) listed 1967 imprints and were published in 1969. Both bibliographies are now published quarterly with annual cumulations.

The SNB in the interests of international cooperation follows internationally accepted cataloguing rules, the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules and the International Standard Bibliographic Description.

One area in which cooperation with the university libraries can be explored is with regard to theses and microfilms. At present SNB does not include these important groups of materials. However, for more complete bibliographic control, these should be included, whether incorporated into the main work or as a supplement. Locally, other projects that could be explored are the provision of a card service for Singapore imprints for local libraries and a cataloguing in publication programme. The provision of these services should

reduce cataloguing costs in many libraries. With limited manpower, much time and money will be saved by not duplicating efforts in the cataloguing of the same title in every library. Serious consideration should also be given to a proposal made at the Theme Workshop on Scientific Technical and Industrial Information Services in Southeast Asia held at Bali in July 1977, that a feasibility study of cooperative cataloguing using MARC tapes be made at regional level.<sup>2</sup>

A retrospective national bibliography to cover pre-1967 imprints has been planned. This major undertaking would involve the cooperation of many libraries in Singapore, as examination of their holdings would have to be carried out.

The JUSCIS also published the Index to Current Malaysian, Singapore and Brunei Periodicals for the years 1967 and 1968. This project is now continued by the national libraries of Singapore and Malaysia, which have since published the Singapore Periodicals Index and the Index Malallah Malaysia (Malaysian Periodicals Index) respectively.

### Bibliography on Malay Culture<sup>3</sup>

A project of the Unesco Advisory Committee for the Study of Malay Culture, the compilation of the Bibliography involves the Southeast Asian countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. The Bibliography was envisaged to have the following purposes :

- \* a) To serve as a basic reference work to writings and publications on Malay Culture ....
- b) To act as a guide to sources for the study of Malay Culture by listing the catalogues of relevant manuscripts, archives and other primary sources, held within and without the project area.

- c) In listing the writings that have been published, it assists the Thematic study by identifying the areas of research already carried out and the gaps that still remain<sup>4</sup>.

Bibliographies have been appointed in each of the participating countries and detailed guidelines have been drawn up by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, whose Librarian is the Project Coordinator. Published and unpublished materials except archives and manuscripts, will be included. The framework of the Bibliography will comprise a general section, a section for historical, geographical and ethnographic setting and a section on cultural elements such as creativity (language, literature, music, arts), ideas (beliefs, knowledge, ethical values) and institutions (legal, social, economic and political organisation).

#### Interlending

A survey of interlibrary loans of Southeast Asian publications made by the National Library in June 1977 showed that interlending is carried on quite freely between Singapore libraries and those overseas and that many of the Singapore libraries provide photocopies or microfilm copies if the original cannot be lent. The National Library, for example, sends photocopies or lends the original book by airmail if there is a duplicate copy, to requesting libraries overseas. For titles not in the library's collection, other libraries' holdings are checked and the request forwarded to them if they have the title and if they participate in international library lending. Almost all the requests from outside Singapore received by the National Library are for Singapore imprints, and since 1974, the library has purchased extra copies of Singapore imprints for interlending purposes.

The Sub-committee on Interlibrary Loans set up by the JSLIBS grew up an Interlibrary Loan Code in 1963 which sets out guidelines and procedures to be followed for interlibrary loans. A standard four-part loan request form printed by the Library Association of Singapore is now in use for loans between Singapore libraries.

#### Cooperative Microfilming Programmes

In Malaysia and Singapore, there are many institutions which have active microfilming programmes. To coordinate and rationalise these programmes, the JSLIBS set up a Sub-committee on Microforms (SMF). Membership is on an institutional basis and is restricted to those institutions having microfilm units or contributing to microfilm programmes.

Some of the agreements arrived at by SMF members include accepting responsibility for the filming of specific titles or groups of materials, to consult each other before embarking on new filming, to lend material to fill up gaps before filming, and to make facilities available by sale or exchange.

#### Regional Microfilm Clearing House

As recommended at the First General Conference of the Southeast Asian Branch, International Council on Archives (ICAHN) held in Manila in 1971, a Regional Microfilm Clearing House was established. Also endorsed by the Conference (now Congress) of Southeast Asian Librarians (SEALIB), it serves as a communication and information-disseminating channel for microfilming activities in Southeast Asia.

The Clearing-House has undertaken several projects, the first being the compilation of a Directory of Microfilm Facilities in Southeast Asia (the second edition of which was published as the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Library Bulletin No.7). Another is the publication of a semi-annual Southeast Asia Microfilms Newsletter to provide information on developments in the Southeast Asian region as well as relevant news from outside the region.

The most important project, a joint SARBICA/CONSAL project, is the compilation of a Masterlist of Southeast Asian Microforms, a "tool to identify, locate and make available for reference purposes all documents in Southeast Asia on microform"<sup>5</sup>. With the financial aid of the International Development Research Centre of Canada, work on the Masterlist began in May 1975 under the editorship of Miss Winarti Partaningrat. A two-year project, work on Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia was undertaken in the first year while the second year covered the Philippines and Thailand as well.

The Masterlist is intended to be comprehensive and to cover all published and unpublished material in microform, including archives, government documents, newspapers, monographs, periodicals, theses. The arrangement is alphabetical within each country section and with a general section for Southeast Asia as a whole, a section for Malay classical literature (pre-19th century), and one for works by Southeast Asian authors which do not deal with Southeast Asian subjects. It contains more than 14,000 cards sent in by some forty-one institutions in the five Southeast Asian countries and will be published by SARBICA in 1977/78. The project will be continued by the National Library of Singapore.

### International Serials Data System (ISDS)

This is the most recent regional project that Singapore is participating in. In 1976, national centres were set up in the five Southeast Asian countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The National Library of Thailand, which is the Thailand centre, was also designated the Regional Centre for Southeast Asia. The national centres send in their data worksheets to the Regional Centre which then forwards them to the International Centre in Paris.

The National Library of Singapore is the National Centre for Singapore with the responsibility of assigning International Standard Serial Numbers (ISSNs) to locally published serials. As a start serials catalogued for the Singapore National Bibliography 1977 were assigned ISSNs.

### A Proposed Consortium of National Libraries and Documentation Centres for Southeast Asia

The necessity for resource sharing on a regional scale has always been recognised. Attempts to identify needs and suggest solutions have been many. The most recent, a Meeting on Interchange of Bibliographic Materials in Southeast Asia, was convened by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Bali in July 1977 and was attended by national librarians of Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand and the Director of the Indonesian National Scientific Documentation Centre. This was a follow-up to an exploratory meeting held in Kuala Lumpur in March 1977 which studied the problems of availability of publications in the five countries. The Bali meeting was held to discuss in greater detail a proposal to create a Consortium of national libraries and documentation centres, seen as one possible solution. The main objectives of the proposed Consortium

would be to improve access to information sources within the Southeast Asian regions, in particular through interlending, improved national bibliographical control and acquisition.

#### Conclusion

In a compact and close-knit society like Singapore, cooperation has always existed between libraries. Regionally too, with the long-standing links and contacts with our Malaysian counterparts and more recently with our ASEAN neighbours, resource sharing will become a way of life in the world of librarianship.

#### Acknowledgement

The author acknowledges with thanks, the help and suggestions received from Mrs Hedwig Anuar, Director, National Library of Singapore.

Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> In January 1976, the JIC decided to dissolve the JSCLCBS and to constitute a new body, the Committee on Bibliographical and Library Cooperation (BILCO), to take its place.
- <sup>2</sup> Valls, J. Improving access to information services in Southeast Asia. Paper presented at the Unesco Workshop on Scientific, Technical and Industrial Information Services in Southeast Asia, Bali, 1977.
- <sup>3</sup> The scope of the project is now broadened, and the bibliography is renamed Bibliography on Southeast Asian Culture.
- <sup>4</sup> Lim, P. Pui Huen and Tan Sok Joo. Bibliography on Malay Culture: the bibliographical framework, in Preliminary Meeting of Bibliographers of the Bibliography on Malay Culture, Singapore, 1976. Report. p.8.
- <sup>5</sup> Partaningrat, Winarti. Progress report on a Joint SARBICA/CONSAL Project: the compilation of a (Regional) Masterlist of Southeast Asian Microforms. Paper presented at the 3rd Conference of Southeast Asian Librarians (CONSAL), Jakarta, 1975.

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